DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 836 HE 022 498

TITLE	Academic Degree Program Duplication.
INSTITUTION	Arizona Board of Regents, Phoenix.
PUB DATE	Nov 88
NOTE	5p.; In "The Arizona Board of Regents' Task Force on Excellence, Efficiency and Competitiveness. Final Report and Working Papers." Volume Two. For Volumes One and Two, see HE 022 446-447. For individual working papers, see HE 022 448-480 and HE 022 482-501. Prepared by the Council of Presidents.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Programs; Competition; Degrees (Academic); Educational Quality; Efficiency; Excellence in Education; Governing Boards; Higher Education; Policy Formation; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Public Colleges; *State Universities; Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS	*Arizona; Arizona State University; Arizona Task Force on Excellence Efficiency Compet; Northern Arizona University; *Program Duplication; University of Arizona

ABSTRACT

As part of the final report of the Arizona Board of Regents' Task Force on Excellence, Efficiency and Competitiveness, the Council of Presidents discusses academic degree program duplication. Current board policies are explained in regard to mission and scope statements (each university shall have a distinctive mission and scope, and no university can expect to offer all programs in all subject areas at all levels). Provisions regarding duplcation are incorporated in a policy manual (for example, funds required for systemwide academic program review will be separately budgeted by the board, data compiled by the universities in an agreed-upon format will be sent to the consultants for review prior to their visit to each campus, and certain duplicated programs may be flagged for systemwide review based upon significant deviation from regional or national norms or other indicators). Substantial justification is required for all requests for authorization to begin planning a new program that duplicates a program offered by another Arizona public university. Other areas discussed are necessary versus unnecessary duplication, quality versus geographical access, economic development, and issues for consideration by the EEC Task Force (e.g., changes needed in current board and/or university policies and procedures related to academic program duplication, and whether or not existing programs should be reviewed for possible unnecessary duplication). (SM)

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ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM DUPLICATION

COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS

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CURRENT BOARD POLICIES

MISSION AND SCOPE STATEMENTS

The Arizona University System Mission and Scope Statements adopted in 1980 include the following language regarding duplication:

"In a number of respects, Arizona's public universities are now more alike than different. This is a necessary result of their designations as universities and the roles which the state's educational climate mandates for them. Each institution accepts a sizeable freshman class and each receives a significant number of transfers from the community college system. The heart of the undergraduate program in each university is rooted in the liberal arts disciplines. Each university can support individual academic departments of sufficient size that graduate work, at least to the masters level, becomes a logical and supportable function integral to the departments. Each institution has developed professional programs of reasonable size and defensible academic prowess in such areas as engineering and nursing.

Each university is authorized to award doctoral degrees, in at least some areas, and even the smallest of the three existing universities is large enough to be classified as a major institution by national norms.

At the outset, it must be understood that these common characteristics of the universities cannot be greatly changed without radically altering their structures and affecting their ability to serve their present constituencies. It is highly probable that any attempt to remove the basic commonalities of these institutions would be counter-productive in terms of dollar savings or institutional efficiency. However, the existence of certain basic elements that are common to all institutions appropriately described as universities does not alter the fact that unique roles may be assigned to institutions of higher education. It is therefore, understood that as basic parameters for the mission and scope statements:

A. Each university shall have a distinctive mission and scope. The universities cannot expect to be identical or duplicative of each other's total missions and functions.

B. No university can expect to offer all programs in all subject areas at all levels."

POLICY MANUAL

The Board's Policy Manual includes the following provisions regarding duplication in Section 2-203, Academic Degree Program Planning and Implementation: "The Board will consider the following criteria in reviewing a request for planning authorization for a new degree

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program that duplicates a degree program offered by another public university in Arizona. It is not necessary for a degree program to meet all of the criteria. However, the Board expects substantial justification for all requests for authorization to begin planning a new program that duplicates a program offered by another Arizona public university.

a. There is a long-term student demand for the program that cannot be met satisfactorily by the existing program.

b. The program would attract a large number of nontraditional, older, part-time students who are place-bound and who cannot move to the community in which the university offering the program is located.

c. The program is a basic academic subject normally taught in most universities.

d. The university currently offering the program cannot deliver the program off campus because of limited resources or because of the need for specialized equipment or library resources.

e. The establishment of the program will not adversely affect the existing program.

f. The resources necessary for the program such as courses, faculty, equipment, and library resources are already available as part of an existing program and the incremental costs for implementing the program are negligible."

An additional policy related to duplication is found in Section 2-208 B, Systemwide Program Review:

"1. Certain duplicated programs may be flagged for systemwide review based upon significant deviation from regional or national norms or other indicators.

2. The Academic Affairs Council will request each university to prepare a list of acceptable outside consultants. Each university may request the removal, for cause, of any number of names from the combined lists. The Regents will select the consultants from the list of names acceptable to all universities.

3. Data and other information compiled by the universities in an agreed upon format will be sent to the consultants for review prior to their visit to each campus.

4. The consultants will be asked to comment upon the quality of the program, resources available to the program, outcomes of the program, program costs, and other factors.

5. Each university will have an opportunity to review the portion of the consultants' report which bears directly upon that institution and to make comments about the report.

6. The consultants' final report and the comments from the universities will be reviewed by the Academic Affairs Council for consideration by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board.

7. Funds required for systemwide academic program review will be separately budgeted by the Board."

These three provisions from the basic governance documents of the Arizona University System reflect the current

Board position on the issue of duplication.

During the years since some of the provisions were adopted, the profiles of the universities have changed. Some of the provisions are still clearly appropriate, but others should be re-examined in the light of the changing programs and priorities, changing state needs, and un-met demographic, economic, and social projections. Additional information that may be useful in a review of this matter is presented below.

NECESSARY VERSUS UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION

The Mission and Scope Statements very clearly indicate that a substantial amount of duplication is necessary and desirable in the three Arizona universities. However, both the Mission and Scope Statements and the Board Policies emphasize that each university should have a distinctive mission and that no university can expect to offer programs in all subject areas at all levels. All general purpose colleges and universities must have a basic core of undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, fine arts, and humanities programs such as English, mathematics, biology, physics, history, music, art, psychology, etc.

Another set of undergraduate and masters programs could be classified as acceptable. They are not absolutely essential to a college or university but they are acceptable and desirable because there is a significant student demand for the program. This category may include bachelors and masters level programs in business, engineering, and education. Duplication is usually not an issue for these programs unless there is a major financial crisis that requires program elimination.

A third set of programs includes those that are highly specialized, very expensive, usually at the doctoral level, and serve a small number of students. These could be candidates for possible unnecessary duplication.

QUALITY VERSUS GEOGRAPHICAL ACCESS

If financial resources for higher education in Arizona were virtually unlimited, the state would be best served by having a university system that provides geographical access to a full range of degree programs at all levels for a large percentage of its population and also provides very high quality programs. However, if resources are limited, the state may have to choose between quality and geographical access.

A university may use its resources to develop a limited number of exceptionally high quality graduate degree programs or it may offer a broad range of modestly funded graduate programs that meet minimum to mid-range quality standards. If the former option is selected, some students will be required to relocate in order to pursue certain graduate degrees, but the degrees earned will have a greater market value for the recipient. If the latter option is selected, access is diminished because some students may not be able to relocate to the community in which the university offering the desired program is located.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The importance of high quality higher education institutions to regional

economic development has become increasingly clear as the high tech/information era has emerged. The importance of a diverse economic base to a region has also become more evident during recent years as the states with economies highly dependent on the price of oil have experienced radical swings in their economic health. Consequently, another consideration in examining the duplication issue is the importance of a particular program to the economic development of the geographical region served by the university.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EEC TASK FORCE

It is clear that the issue of program duplication has implications for efficiency, excellence, and competitiveness. Therefore, the EEC Task Force and its staff should consider addressing the following issues:

1. What assumptions about the availability of state resources should guide university and Board decisions about academic program development during the next planning period?

2. What strategy for program development would best serve the state's interest in providing educational opportunities, in promoting economic development, and in improving the quality of life for Arizona residents?

3. What changes are needed in current Board and/or university policies and procedures related to academic program duplication?

4. Should any existing programs be reviewed for possible unnecessary duplication? If yes, how should those programs be identified?